☰



⌕



DAVID WHITEHOUSE 2017-12-14

ORIGINS OF THE POLICE

NECROPOLITICS BARBARISM, CAPITALISM, COPS, HISTORY OF POLICE, LAW AND POLICE, POLICE STATE

… The next general point is about something we all know, and that's this:

There is the law … and then there's what cops do.

First, a few words about the law: Despite what you may have learned in civics class, the law is not the framework in which society operates. The law is a product of the way society operates, but it doesn't tell you how things really work. The law is also not a framework for the way that society *should* operate, even though some people hold out that hope.

The law is really just one tool among others, in the hands of those who are empowered to use it, to affect the course of events. Corporations are empowered to use this tool because they can hire expensive lawyers. Politicians, prosecutors and the police are also empowered to use the law.

Now, specifically about cops and the law. The law has many more provisions than they actually use, so their enforcement is always selective. That means that they are *always* profiling what part of the population to target and choosing which kinds of behavior they want to change. It also means that cops have a permanent opportunity for corruption. If they have discretion over who gets picked up for a crime, they can demand a reward for not picking somebody up.

Another way to see the gap between the law and what cops do is to examine the common idea that punishment begins after conviction in a court. The thing is, anybody who's dealt with the cops will tell you that punishment begins the moment they lay hands on you. They can arrest you and put you in jail without ever filing charges. That's punishment, and they know it. That's not to mention the physical abuse you might get, or the ways they can mess with you even if they don't arrest you.

So the cops order people around every day without a court order, and they punish people every day without a court judgment. Obviously, then, some of the key social functions of the police are not written into the law. They're part of police culture that cops learn from each other with encouragement and direction from their commanders…

read here

← PREVIOUS NEXT →